

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /059 W

-----025314 191738Z /45

R 191607Z SEP 77

FM AMCONSUL VANCOUVER

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

ALL OTHER CANADIAN CONSULATES POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: BRITISH COLUMBIA VIEWS ON QUEBEC SEPARATISM:  
QUARTERLY UPDATE

REF: (A) VANCOUVER 578 (B) VANCOUVER 655

1. SUMMARY: BRITISH COLUMBIANS ARE COMMITTED TO CANADIAN UNITY WITHIN CONFEDERATION BUT FIND LITTLE LEADERSHIP FROM OTTAWA ON HOW THIS IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. SMALL BUT GROWING NUMBER OF BRITISH COLUMBIANS ARE OF BELIEF MORE SHOULD BE DONE TOWARDS RECOGNIZING QUEBEC'S LEGITIMATE CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE ASPIRATIONS AND B.C. GOVERNMENT BEING URGED BY SOME TO PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT FRENCH EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. QUEBEC WHITE PAPER ON ORGANIZATION OF THE SEPARATION REFERENDUM HAS DRAWN SHARP PRESS CRITICISM. THE VANCOUVER PROVINCE HAS EDITORIALIZED THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE FOR QUEBEC ALONE TO DETERMINE THE FUTURE SHAPE OF CANADA. END SUMMARY.

2. ANY RANKING OF NATIONAL CANADIAN ISSUES WOULD PUT THE MATTER OF KEEPING QUEBEC IN CANADA AT THE VERY TOP  
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AND FOR THEIR PART BRITISH COLUMBIANS REMAIN DEEPLY COMMITTED TO CANADIAN UNITY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF CONFEDERATION. BRITISH COLUMBIANS LOOK TO THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR STRATEGIES ON HOW THIS IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED, BUT FIND LITTLE SENSE OF URGENCY OR LITTLE THAT IS NEW IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS. EVEN THE EARLY JULY NATIONAL UNITY DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT CAME ACROSS TO

BRITISH COLUMBIANS AS PRETTY MUCH A NON-EVENT WHICH DID LITTLE, IF ANYTHING, TO ENLIGHTEN THE PUBLIC AND MOVE THE COUNTRY FIRMLY TOWARD A SOLUTION OF THE UNITY CRISIS.

3. CONSEQUENTLY, BRITISH COLUMBIANS--ONE YEAR AFTER THE PARTI QUEBECOIS ELECTION VICTORY--STILL REMAIN LARGELY SPECTATORS TO THE SEEMING DESULTORY AND OCCASIONAL SPARRING BETWEEN PIERRE TRUDEAU AND RENE LEVESQUE. A PLETHORA OF SMALL GROUPS AND COMMITTEES HAVE SPRUNG UP IN VANCOUVER AND OTHER B.C. COMMUNITIES WITH THE GOAL OF "SAVING CANADA," AND OVER TIME THEIR ATTITUDES AND IDEAS MAY BE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON PARLIAMENT, THE MEDIA, AND OTHER OPINION-MAKERS. IN GENERAL, SUCH ORGANIZATIONS IN B.C. TAKE THE VIEW THAT QUEBEC'S CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE ASPIRATIONS ARE LEGITIMATE AND SHOULD BE PRESERVED WITHIN THE CONFEDERATION. THERE IS ALSO A GROWING, BUT STILL VERY SMALL, SENTIMENT IN B.C. THAT THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HAS DONE PRECIOUS LITTLE IN THE AREA OF FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION. THE VANCOUVER PROVINCE IN A RECENT EDITORIAL VOICED CONCERN OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S "DAWDLING" BEHIND A GOOD SECTION OF B.C. PUBLIC OPINION AND STATED "A COMMITMENT BY PREMIER BENNETT TO PROVIDE EDUCATION IN FRENCH FOR BOTH ENGLISH-SPEAKING AND FRENCH-SPEAKING CHILDREN WOULD SHOW CANADIANS THAT CHANGE IS POSSIBLE, AND THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS NOT THE ONLY AGENT FOR CHANGE."

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4. B.C. PREMIER BENNETT, HOWEVER, CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT THE KEY ISSUE IN THE QUEBEC DEBATE IS ECONOMIC AND THAT INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT HAVE LED MANY QUEBECKERS TO SEEK INDEPENDENCE AS A SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEMS. THE PREMIER VISITED MONTREAL JUST PRIOR TO LAST MONTH'S PREMIERS' CONFERENCE AND HAS STATED THAT HE CAME AWAY MORE CONVINCED THAN EVER THAT "SEPARATION IS NOT THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE OF QUEBEC" AND THAT "QUEBEC'S PROBLEMS ARE THE SAME AS OURS, UNEMPLOYMENT, JOB CREATION, THE DECLINING DOLLAR."

5. ACCORDING TO THE VANCOUVER PRESS, THE WILL OF THE QUEBEC PEOPLE MAY NEVER HAVE A FAIR CHANCE FOR EXPRESSION IF A REFERENDUM IS ORGANIZED, FINANCED AND CONDUCTED ACCORDING TO PROPOSALS SET FORTH IN THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT'S WHITE PAPER OF LATE AUGUST. THE VANCOUVER SUN, NOTING THAT THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE SOLE CONTROL OVER THE WORDING AND TIMING OF THE REFERENDUM AND THAT FUNDS FOR CAMPAIGNING COULD ONLY COME FROM THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT, QUEBEC POLITICAL PARTIES AND INDIVIDUALS ON QUEBEC'S VOTERS' LIST, ALLEGED THAT "THUS

WOULD THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT ADJUDICATE THE FATE OF BRITISH COLUMBIANS." A PROVINCE EDITORIAL OF AUGUST 30 QUICKLY AGREED AND STATED CLEARLY THAT "MOST CANADIANS, WE BELIEVE, REGARD THE REFERENDUM, WHICH, AFTER ALL, MAY WELL CHANGE THE CONDITION OF CANADA AS WE KNOW IT, AS A MATTER FOR

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ALL (ITALICIZED) CANADIANS, NOT JUST QUEBECKERS. AND THE RULES ARE FOR CANADIANS AS A WHOLE TO DECIDE, WE WOULD IMAGINE." LUPPI

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